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| **Activity:** | Hikes and Hillwalking | **Location:** | Off-Site | **Last review date:** | December 2022 | **Produced by:** | Alex Windows (Section Leader) |
| **Next review date:** | December 2025 | **Quality Assured by:** |  |

* POR 9.26 Hill Walking Permit - <https://www.scouts.org.uk/por/9-activities/#9.26>
* POR 9.27 Hill Walking Safety - <https://www.scouts.org.uk/por/9-activities/#9.27>
* POR 9.28 Terrain Zero Definition (*No Permit Required*) - <https://www.scouts.org.uk/por/9-activities/#9.28>
* POR 9.29 Terrain One Definition (***Permit Required***) - <https://www.scouts.org.uk/por/9-activities/#9.29>
* POR 9.30 Terrain Two Definition (***Permit Required***) - <https://www.scouts.org.uk/por/9-activities/#9.30>
* POR 9.32 Party Size - <https://www.scouts.org.uk/por/9-activities/#9.32>
* TSA Hillwalking Guidance - <https://www.scouts.org.uk/volunteers/running-your-section/programme-guidance/general-activity-guidance/hillwalking/>
* TSA Terrain Zero Activities Guidance - <https://www.scouts.org.uk/volunteers/running-your-section/programme-guidance/general-activity-guidance/hillwalking/terrain-zero-activities/>

Risk Assessment produced using the BMC Safety on Mountains book - <https://shop.thebmc.co.uk/product/safety-on-mountains/>

| **What are the hazards?** | **What are the risks?** | **Who is most at risk?** | **What control measures will be put in place?** |
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| **Clothing** | Hypo/hyperthermia.  Getting wet.  Discomfort. | All – especially those who are less experienced. | Participants will be briefed on the correct equipment and requirements/ specifications to complete the activity safely. See the Group’s [recommended kit specifications](https://www.4thstaffordscouts.org.uk/scouts/recommended-kit).  Leaders will check the clothing and equipment of young people before embarking on hillwalking activities, where specific clothing or equipment is important.  Where necessary, a leader may provide training on what equipment to bring and how to pack equipment ahead of hillwalking events.  Participants will be advised on suitable clothing to wear and carry (including sun protection and waterproofs) prior to departure.   * **Hiking boots** – considerations; boots should provide ankle support, an ‘aggressive’ tread pattern for grip and waterproof qualities. * **Socks** – considerations; thick enough to regular temperature (especially in cold weather) and prevent blisters. Participants should bring spare pairs of socks in case they get wet or cold. * **Insulating layers** – important in regulating temperature, if hot or cold. Bring additional layers to add or remove as required. Where possible, use materials which do not absorb moisture e.g. wool or synthetic fibres. Avoid cotton. * **Gloves** – should be carried or worn by participants if cold. * **Head ware** – e.g., hat, balaclava, scarf (when cold) or sunhat (if hot) etc. should be carried and warn if cold or to protect against the sun on hot days. * **Waterproofs** – inc. trousers and jacket/coat, Gaiters etc. at least waterproof trousers and a coat must be carried by participants. |
| **Equipment** | Discomfort.  Getting lost.  Injury. | All | An equipment check should be carried out before embarking on a hike   * **Rucksack** – participants should have a small/medium rucksack, at least 25/30 litre, with a waist strap to distribute weight across the hips rather than shoulders. Other types of bags are not suitable. An ill-fitting rucksack will become too heavy when carried for long periods, causing tiredness and fatigue. Participants should be briefed on the best way of packing the rucksack to ensure the most important/needed items are easily accessible. Rucksacks should also have a waterproof layer, either a waterproof cover or an internal water layer, e.g. a plastic bin liner. Participants should also be shown the correct way to wear the rucksack and adjust straps to distribute weight evenly, mainly over the hips. * **Map and Compass** – enough copies of the appropriate OS map and scale (most likely 1:25k) should be available, especially for large or split groups. If required, compasses should be available. * **GPS** – at least one GPS enabled device should be carried by a leader to identify a location in an emergency. * **Walking/Confidence Ropes** – could be carried by leaders if the terrain is difficult to pass (particularly in terrain two). Leaders and participants should be trained on correct use. * **Sunscreen** – cold mountain breezes on sunny days can be misleading. Sun protection should be applied before embarking. * **Insect repellent** – more important in some locations than others (e.g. Scotland). Products containing DEET are the most effective. * **Food** – Participants will be advised on the type and quantity of food to take. Consuming little and often is the best way to maintain energy. It may be necessary if bring ‘emergency’ foods., e.g., high-energy bars. * **Drink** - Everyone is to bring a filled water bottle of an appropriate size (usually at least 750 ml) for the length of the hike and weather conditions. Bringing a hot drink in a flask for cold weather might be advised. Additional stops could be required, in hot weather, to refill water containers. * **Group shelter** – to be used in poor visibility, to give first aid in poor weather or in an emergency. Should be carried by someone in the group during the hike. * **First aid kit** – mountain leader first aid kit(s) to be carried during all hiking/hillwalking activities. * **Torch** – should always be carried even if walking in the dark is not planned, in the event of being stuck or waiting for help in an emergency. * **Whistle** - carried by at least a few participants to sound for help in an emergency. |
| **Terrain** | Falling.  Slipping.  Injury. | All | Routes should be checked by leaders ahead of the hike to identify any terrain that could be physically challenging. An alternative route avoiding these parts could be planned in case it is too difficult.   * **Slopes/Movement Skills** – inexperienced participants could be brief on simple movement techniques, e.g., keeping a good centre of balance. * **Grass slopes or Loose rocks (Scree)** – participants could be advised to concentrate on foot placement. * **Water**, inc. rivers, bogs, marshes and lakes – should be avoided. Advise caution when walking around bodies of water. If crossing water is required, find a point where the water is shallowest, narrowest, and slowest, where possible. Rucksack straps could be loosened in case it needs to be removed in an emergency. Leaders to assist young people in crossing. |
| **Groups** | Overexertion.  Getting lost / group management. | Young People | * **Fitness/ability** – consider the ability of the group and what they can achieve. It could be prudent to split into smaller groups based on ability and take different routes, skills etc as appropriate. * **Group size** – depending on route, participants attending and weather conditions, split into smaller walking groups. These could stay within ~3 km and ensure communication can be maintained. * **Authorisation** – appropriate consent and personal information, including medical information, should be carried for all young people, including young leaders. |
| **Weather** | Hypo/hyperthermia.  Getting wet.  Discomfort. | All | * Leaders should obtain a comprehensive suitable weather forecast, including a mountain specific weather forecast, before embarking. Equipment, route or advice should be adjusted as required. * Leaders should check everyone is suitably equipped at the start and should carry spare clothing, e.g., socks, gloves etc. * Leaders should monitor the weather forecast in advance and during the activity - if heavy rain is forecast then an alternative route could be planned or adapted. * Escape routes and alternative routes should be identified. * **Wind** – expect the wind speeds on the hills to be 2 to 3 times faster than at sea level. Leaders should know the prevailing wind direction and consider advice when walking in exposed areas. * **Temperature** – the effect of wind and high altitude can lead to very cool temperatures or ‘feels like’ temperatures. Obtain weather forecasts that give such measures, plan and advise equipment and clothing accordingly. |
| **Animals and Plants** | Chased/trampled.  Bites/diseases.  Spikes / Toxins. | All | * **Livestock** - Leaders will monitor livestock, especially when cows have young. Walk past livestock calmly and do not make sudden noises. An alternative route could be found to avoid crossing any fields with livestock present. * **Ticks** - Young people should be advised to walk in the centre of footpaths and avoid unnecessary contact with vegetation. Leaders could also advise participants to cover up, e.g., wear long trousers and sleeves if visiting tick prone areas. Young people could check themselves and each other regularly for ticks. Leaders should carry tick tweeters in first aid kits. Everyone should check themselves thoroughly when they get home, leaders to advise participants and parents. * TSA Guidance on ticks – <https://www.scouts.org.uk/volunteers/staying-safe-and-safeguarding/safety/keeping-safe-at-camp/ticks-advice-on-protection-prevention-and-removal> * **Plants** - Young people should be briefed to avoid some vegetation, such as Brambles, Nettles, Western Gorse etc. Young people could be advised to cover up, e.g., wear long trousers and sleeves if vegetation is likely to be dense. |
| **Navigation** | Getting Lost. | All | * The agreed route should be within the navigational and physical capabilities of participants, considering skills and technical ability. * An adequate number of maps, compasses and route instructions should be provided to each group/person as appropriate. * Each group must have at least one sufficiently competent navigator for the terrain and conditions. |
| **Sanitation** | Disease.  Contamination.  Discomfort. | All | * **Urinating/Defecating** – avoided if possible. Done at least 30 metres away from fresh water. Leaders could bring a lightweight trowel for longer hikes. * **Female Sanitation** – sanitary towels and accessories will be carried by the group including plastic bags to carry away for disposal. * **Obtaining Water** – avoid collecting water for drinking if possible. Where this is required, collect from fresh, running water sources. Use filtration or sterilisation, as necessary. |
| **Access** | Injury.  Environmental Impact. | All | * **Rights of way** – Ensure rights and responsibilities of land access are understood. As much as possible, plan hikes on public rights of way (PRoW) land or CRoW land (land subject to the countryside rights of way act). For other land, permission may need to be obtained to access it. * **Stiles** - Participants should take extra care when climbing over stiles, especially if the stile is wet or unsteady. Leaders could position themselves around the stile to aid/steady young people. Young people may want to remove their rucksack and pass it over the stile before stepping over themselves, to give them more stability. * **Gates and fences** - The route should avoid having to climb over fences or boundaries. Leave gates closed after use. * **Erosion** – stick the middle of footpaths (erosion scar) rather than walking around and risking enlarging the eroded area. * **Wildfires** – do not use flammable materials, including stoves, when vegetation/ground is dry. |
| **Emergencies** | Unable to get help or locate. | All | * **Communication** - Every group should have an effective means of emergency communication with other groups, home contact (in touch) and emergency services. * **Route Cards** – all participants should have access to route cards, maps, and emergency cards. * **Authorisation/Inform** – send the T0/1/2 form (as appropriate) to DC and GSL. The leader could attach route plans when sending to GSL and DC (this gives a chance for them to question/not approve – the onus of safety is also on them). * **Home Contact** (in touch) - Could be more than one person. Must be available ‘around the clock’ and they should be prepared to pass messages, including emergency communications, on from leaders to parents and vice versa, as well as other appropriate authorities. They should receive a briefing on the activity before undertaking it, so they are aware of plans and routes. |